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Spiritual and Religious Capabilities for Catholic Schools

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Cover Page Footnote

The authors are appreciative of the time and suggestions given by early childhood and secondary RE teachers in two Catholic schools in Perth, WA for examples of spiritual and religious capabilities.

Spiritual and religious capabilities for Catholic schools

Abstract

The Australian Curriculum articulates the role of general capabilities across all learning areas in the schooling years. The function of these general capabilities is to ensure that students have the dispositions and skills that provide for deep learning and the ability to function successfully in the 21st Century. Within Catholic schools, these same general capabilities apply. Catholic schools, in recognising the mission of the Church, are however, called to ensure that not only are students able to participate in the 21st Century context, but that they are able to evangelise through the integration of faith, life and culture. This article acknowledges the distinctive nature of the Catholic school by proposing that both spiritual and religious capabilities feature amongst these general capabilities.

Introduction

This article proposes the need for the development of both spiritual and religious capabilities within Catholic education curriculum in Australian schools. Currently the Australian curriculum articulates the desire for all students to become confident and productive learners who are able to positively contribute to society (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2013). In assisting educators, the Australian curriculum provides seven general capabilities for students to attain in order to function successfully in society. However, the distinctive nature of the Catholic school, and its evangelising mission, necessitate that both spiritual and religious capabilities should feature amongst these capabilities. The Catholic school aims to complement the evangelising mission of the Church and "is a privileged environment in which Christian education is carried out ... in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony". (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997, para. 11). This integration of faith, life and culture is a distinguishing feature of the Catholic school and one which can be enhanced through the attainment of capabilities that draw on the spiritual and religious abilities of the student. When placed alongside the Australian curriculum's general capabilities, the opportunity exists to form Christian adults that are able to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century (ACARA, 2013).

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Catholic schools and the Australian Curriculum

The Australian curriculum is premised on how young people can "…become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens" (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 2008, p. 7). Catholic schools uphold this premise in tune with Vatican Council II's (1965) statement that, "No less than other schools does the Catholic school pursue cultural goals and the human formation of youth." (para. 8). However, there is a critical caveat to this educational goal based on the Church's mission to evangelise:

> But [the Catholic school's] proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made through baptism as they develop their own personalities, and finally to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life and [the human person] is illumined by faith. (para. 8)

In the year, 2015, the Catholic Church celebrates the 50th anniversary of Vatican Council II's (1965) *Declaration on Christian education* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014). It is perhaps timely to examine how young people access opportunities to be formed spiritually and religiously as "new creatures made through baptism" and understand a worldview with a religious context ("illumined by faith") in a Catholic school. The Australian curriculum, while subject to recommendations from a Federal Government Review (Topsfield & Knott, 2014), currently articulates seven general capabilities and three cross-curricular priorities to create confident and productive young Australians (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2013). Catholics schools could make explicit its *evangelising* goals by positioning spiritual and religious capabilities and a Catholic worldview (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2012) cross-curriculum priority as part of its core *modus operandi* for learning and formation (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997, para. 11, 15; Francis 1, 2013, para. 134). Figure One highlights the distinction between the structural components of the Australian curriculum and the curriculum in a Catholic school.
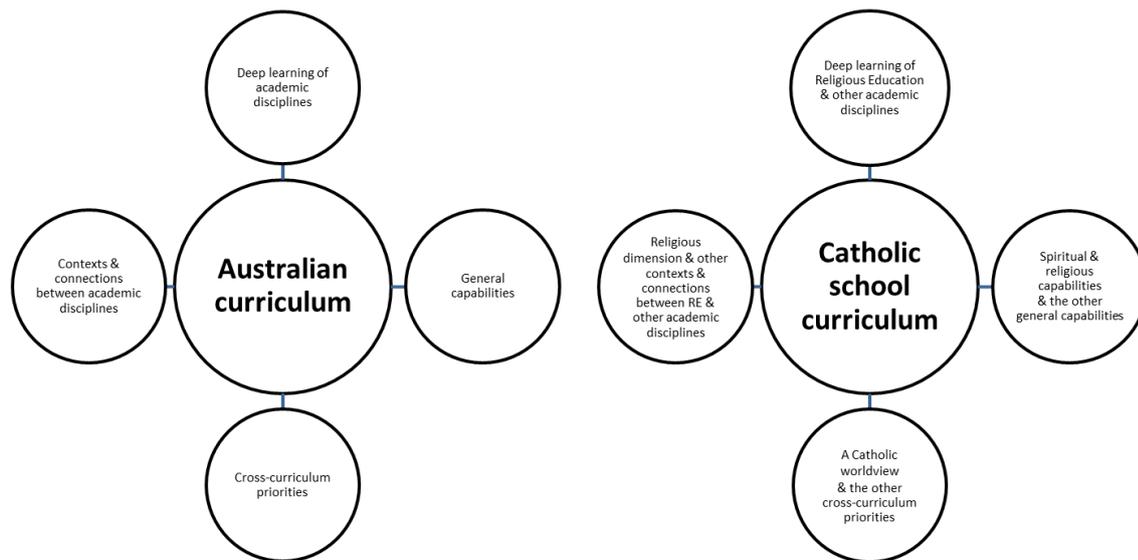
Figure 1: Distinctions between the Australian curriculum and the curriculum in a Catholic school.

The distinctiveness of the Catholic school curriculum is described by the former Secretary, Congregation for Catholic Education, Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB (2006) as one that,

> …should be inspired by a supernatural vision, founded on Christian anthropology, animated by communion and community, imbued with a Catholic worldview throughout its curriculum, and sustained by gospel witness. (para. 1)

Without these features, a Catholic school would likely no longer consider itself to be Catholic nor be seen to embrace the evangelising goals of the Catholic Church. Barry (2008) adds to the discussion on the distinctive curriculum within a Catholic school when exploring the features of Catholicism. In doing so, he explicates that "curriculum in a Catholic school reflects Catholic understandings of community and communion by promoting learning about and experience of inclusion, belonging, participation, engagement and service to others" (p. 3). The curriculum in the context of the Catholic faith tradition should "contribute to the development of spiritual sensitivity … [and a] faithfulness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (p. 4).

There are examples of Catholic Education systems articulating these evangelising goals for their schools. The Catholic Schools Office (CSO), Diocese of Broken Bay (2004) promotes a Catholic

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worldview to pervade the curriculum in their schools:

> The Catholic Worldview perceives:
>
> 1. God as Trinity, a communion of Persons who love us and invite us to share in their divine life for all eternity;
>
> 2. the action of the Spirit in the world, inviting and empowering all people to respond to the divine love;
>
> 3. Jesus as God's Son, who saved us through his life, death and resurrection, and through whom we enter into the life of God;
>
> 4. the meaning and purpose of life as grounded in God's love for us and our response as disciples of Jesus;
>
> 5. the Church as the communion of disciples that makes present to the world the mystery of Jesus and, through its sacramental life, makes us part of that mystery;
>
> 6. the presence of God in our daily life, in the Eucharist, in the Sacred Scriptures and in the living tradition of the Church;
>
> 7. the cross of Jesus in the struggles and hardships of life and approaches them as Jesus did his cross, with trust and confidence in God;
>
> 8. each human being as a unique person created in the image of God, having an inalienable dignity that is always to be respected;
>
> 9. an imperative to proclaim to others the love we receive from Jesus, by loving them as Jesus loves us; [and,]
>
> 10. an obligation to work to create social conditions in which the unique dignity of each person is respected and all human rights protected. (p. 19)

In Western Australia, The Catholic Bishop's Mandate Letter (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia [CECWA], 2009) promulgates the responsibility of Catholic schools to provide academic excellence within the unique context of the Catholic tradition. As well as recognising the Australian curriculum's goal to produce active members of society, the Catholic school seeks to form adults that possess a Christian mentality toward society, whom are able to integrate faith, life and culture (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997, paras 11, 37). The Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (2012) recommends that six actions need to be incorporated within the life of the Catholic school:

We in Catholic Education seek to create environments that enhance learning, nurture young people and empower them to live the Catholic faith in the spirit of Jesus Christ by:

- building communities centred on prayer, stillness and reflection;

- developing a hunger for the learning adventure;

- challenging each other to seek truth and justice for all, especially the most vulnerable;

- capturing the joy in the mystery of the created universe;

- embracing the diversity of the Earth and all its people; [and,]

- walking together in a spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness.

For this article, the focus is on how Catholic schools can explicate some specific spiritual and religious capabilities as part of their school curriculum to complement the statements surrounding their evangelising goals. These capabilities may be subsumed under the personal and social capabilities of the Australian curriculum (ACARA, n. d.) but the danger in doing so is that they are then treated as only individual preferences rather than a school community commitment (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2012, pp. 18-19). However, spiritual and religious capabilities always remain an aspiration to students in Catholic schools, as Pope Benedict XVI (2010) proclaimed, "We impose nothing, yet we propose ceaselessly" (para. 4). Before looking at where spiritual and religious capabilities may be incorporated with these general capabilities, some discussion about the term and its application to human development may be useful. In the next section of the article, the nature of capabilities and the types of spiritual and religious capabilities that can be developed in Catholic schools are explored.

What are capabilities?

The concept of capability is drawn from the work of economist Amartya Sen and constitutional lawyer, Martha Nussbaum. Sen (1993) proposes that in considering the economic development of a country, each person's well-being must include the functions of having the freedom to make choices and to live a life of meaning. He refers to these functionings as *capabilities.* In essence, a *human capability* is "what people are actually able to do and to be" (Sen,

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1993, p. 32). The focus is on shifting human development from an emphasis on seeing people as merely objects for economic growth (or exploitation) towards individuals who "are treated as each worthy of regard, and in which each has been put in a position to live really humanly" (Nussbaum, 2001, Questions, Tools, and Processes, para. 4). Sen and Nussbaum propose that each human being can only become such a being when their abilities are developed fully. This pursuit of human development is a moral obligation incumbent on communities, especially on leaders to act upon (Nussbaum, 2001, Central Human Functional Capabilities, para. 8). Nussbaum believes that particular capabilities should be recognised and encouraged for the good and dignity of the human person (Sen 1993, p. 47; Nussbaum, 2011, p. 20). The inclusion of capabilities in the curriculum allows for the integration of "knowing, acting and being in students", that is, to be able to know, to do and to be (or to value) operates as a pedagogical mainstay (Walker, 2005, p. 68).

The identification of capabilities to do the good and develop well-being as described above is reflected in the Australian curriculum. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority describes a *capability* as what:

> encompasses knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions. Students develop capability when they apply knowledge and skills confidently, effectively and appropriately in complex and changing circumstances, both in their learning at school and in their lives outside school. The encouragement of positive behaviours and dispositions underpins all … capabilities. (ACARA, 2013, p. 5)

This articulation of what a capability is based on to be able to know, to do and to be or to value seems obscure but ACARA is quick to identify and elaborate on the key or *general* capabilities it believes young Australians need to acquire for living successfully in the 21st century. The general capabilities are: literacy; numeracy; information and communication technology (ICT) capability; critical and creative thinking; personal and social capability; ethical understanding; and, intercultural understanding. While the first four capabilities may focus specifically on skilling a young person for a 21st century workforce, the latter three tend to focus on the individual's emotional and mental well-being and liberal democratic participation (Cranston, Kimber, Mulford, Reid, & Keating, 2010, pp.

183-184). While spirituality and religious cultural diversity are recognized in the *Melbourne declaration* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 2008), there seems to be little effort to draw out the notion of the spiritual, let alone the religious, in the discourse of the capabilities (Reid, 2011; D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2012, p. 18). The explicit omission of spiritual and religious capabilities reinforces a secularist worldview that seems incomplete compared to a Catholic understanding of the whole person (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2012, p. 19).

Catholic schools have a responsibility to draw out the spiritual and religious dimensions of young people (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, paras 19, 30). Personal and social capabilities in the Australian curriculum (ACARA, n. d. c) may suffice at a secular level but are insufficient in assisting students to engage with the divine. At the heart of Catholic education is the forming of a student who has a commitment to restoring God's harmony in the world (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993, para. 376), to not only love self and neighbour on God's behalf, but also to become "one who talks consciously with God, one who is there for God to love" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 55). Young people should be taught to live a transcendent spirituality:

> Every educational setting can be a place of openness to the transcendent and to others; a place of dialogue, cohesiveness and attentive listening, where young people feel appreciated for their personal abilities and inner riches, and can learn to esteem their brothers and sisters. May young people be taught to savour the joy which comes from the daily exercise of charity and compassion towards others and from taking an active part in the building of a more humane and fraternal society. (Benedict XVI, 2012, para. 2)

A focus on developing this transcendent nature of leading a meaningful and purposeful life and an awareness of the Transcendent, as a distinctive feature of Catholic education, suggests there should be capabilities specifically targeted towards these aspects ie spiritual and religious capabilities.

What are spiritual capabilities?

The identification of spiritual capabilities depends on the definition of spirituality used.

Rossiter (2010) defines spirituality as,

> …the natural dimension to life that includes: thinking and feelings about transcendence; ideas about a creator or creative force in the cosmos; human values; sense of meaning and purpose in life; love and care for self and others; sense of stewardship for the earth and its flora and fauna; the aesthetic. Spirituality is the way in which a spiritual/moral dimension enters into, or is implied in, the thinking and behaviour of individuals. (p. 7)

The definition highlights the person as a reflective and relational human being. For Catholic schools, the raising of awareness of the spiritual is a significant component of the curriculum (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 30). The personal and social capabilities in the Australian curriculum identify similar 'functionings' around four interrelated organising elements: "Self-awareness, Self-management, Social awareness and Social management" (ACARA, 2013, p. 4). The need to include time in the school day for personal reflection and re-orientation is seen by the trend in teaching young people 'mindfulness' practices (Kuyken et al, 2013; Lawlor, 2014). While such practices may be helpful for clarity of mind, the search for a sense of self or meaning solely inwards may be fraught with danger:

> One necessary condition for meaning is the attachment to something larger than the self: and the larger that entity, the more meaning you can derive. To the extent that it is now difficult for young people to take seriously their relationship to God, to care about their relationship to the country, or to be part of a large and abiding family, meaning in life will be very difficult to find. The self, to put it another way, is a very poor site for meaning. (Seligman, 1990 cited in Eckersley, 2007, p. 42)

The need to belong to something bigger, to transcend one's life of self-indulgence or to fight debilitating depression through positive youth development is well recognised (Donovan et al, 2006; Spiewak & Sherrod, 2008; Warren 2012). Catholic schools may be well placed in drawing out the dimension of the 'other' and commitment to the good of the community to alleviate these issues for

students through programs such as Christian service learning, student ministry, and student leadership development (Lavery & Hackett, 2008; Hackett & Lavery, 2011; Hine, 2013).

This awareness or sense of who am I, who can I become and how can I contribute to the community forms the basis of a person's spirituality or "relational consciousness" (Hay & Nye, 2006, p. 109), a sensitivity to moving beyond oneself. Hay and Nye (2006) propose "three interrelated themes or categories of spiritual sensitivity": awareness-sensing, mystery-sensing and value sensing (pp. 64-65). In each category there are particular personal actions or functionings that can form the basis of spiritual capabilities. In the case of awareness-sensing, there are the ways a person can choose to pay attention such as attending to the present moment, to tune in or go along with an experience and "getting in touch with the felt sense of reality" (p. 70). For mystery-sensing, there are profound experiences that provoke responses of wonder and awe or that excite the imagination to consider possibilities. For value-sensing, there are those experiences that can create empathy and compassion, a desire for goodness or "a search for and discovery of meaning" (p. 77). The end result is a person who is free to thrive and to become fully human, that is, freedom towards "the growth of the whole person" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 29).

Wider society has also recognised the innate spiritual capacity of the individual and the need for this capacity to be nurtured, particularly in the early years of development. *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework [EYLF]* (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR], 2009) is a nationally mandated framework for educators working with children aged from birth to five years. The document identifies the holistic nature of development, and therefore education, stating, "Children's learning is dynamic, complex and holistic. Physical, social, emotional, personal, spiritual, creative, cognitive and linguistic aspects of learning are all intricately interwoven and interrelated" (DEEWR, 2009, p. 9). The EYLF describes spirituality as including experiences of wonder and awe, of investigating who they are and who they will become, and tasks educators with attending to this facet of development.

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On this basis, it may be possible to identify generic spiritual capabilities. These capabilities range from "basic human spiritualities" (Rossiter, 2010, p. 7) that interrelate with the personal and social capabilities in the Australian curriculum to a wider horizon of transcendence that includes a basic form of theistic spirituality. Many young people may believe in God or Jesus in a 'feel good' way, and have even received initiatory catechetical instruction, but they do not necessarily commit themselves to a religious culture or community and so remain what could be called, 'pre-churched', as opposed to the commonly and, perhaps derogatory, term 'unchurched' (Rossiter, 2010, pp. 7-8).

Generic Spiritual Capabilities for Catholic schools

The generic spiritual capabilities for Catholic schools identified in this article are to be seen as possible exemplars rather than a comprehensive list. Nonetheless, these capabilities flow from a core spiritual capability — to thrive and be fully human. As Pope Benedict (2012) extolled to young people:

> To make a commitment, to face hard work and sacrifice, to choose the paths that demand fidelity and constancy, humility and dedication. Be confident in your youth and its profound desires for happiness, truth, beauty and genuine love! Live fully this time in your life so rich and so full of enthusiasm. (para. 6)

The construct of the spiritual capability follows that expressed by Sen (1993) that indicates a human action or behaviour resulting in a value or disposition, "actually able to do and to be" (p. 32). In Catholic theological parlance, 'to become' may seem to better reflect Sen's intent of the person who is free to participate in his/her development (International Theological Commission, 2000-2002, para. 12). Each capability (Table One) is listed as 'to do and to become'. The capability statements are closely aligned with the Church's tradition of *cardinal human virtues*, "stable dispositions of the intellect and the will that govern our acts, order our passions, and guide our conduct in accordance with reason and faith" (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993, para. 1834). There are four such key virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance under which other human virtues or spiritual capabilities may be grouped.

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Table One

Generic Spiritual Capabilities

Cardinal Human Virtues	Generic Spiritual Capabilities	Habits or dispositions
Prudence (Right choices)	• To wonder & become awe-filled • To search beyond & become wise	➔ To adopt habits of perceiving the mystery of self, others, the world and God.
Justice (Right relationships)	• To relate & become loving • To regret & become forgiving	➔ To adopt habits of seeking harmony with self, others, the world and God.
Fortitude (Inner strength)	• To dare & become resilient • To yearn & become good	➔ To adopt habits of integrity to overcome temptation and sinfulness.
Temperance (Moderation)	• To fast & become grateful • To meditate & become peaceful • To enjoy life & become happy	➔ To adopt habits of positive self-discipline, propriety and contentment.

Some examples of implementing spiritual capabilities at the two ends of Catholic schooling are now described. These examples are illustrative of what may be possible and attempt to show distinctions in implementation. Catholic primary schooling would show a transition between the two and are not addressed in this paper. Tables Two and Three provide examples of spiritual capabilities in early childhood and secondary education. In each table, the capabilities are organised by virtue, whether the focus is within the RE lesson or outside the RE lesson. These foci are further divided by how a capability may be 'addressed' (that is, students learn about this capability in the classroom) or how a capability may be 'exercised' (that is, students apply the capability within a given situation).

Examples of implementing Spiritual Capabilities in early childhood education

Table Two outlines the cardinal human virtues in relation to an early childhood context. As illustrated in Table One, the cardinal human virtues are aligned with general spiritual capabilities and these are recognised as having the potential to be developed both within the Religious Education (RE) lesson and as integrated throughout the early childhood classroom. Table Two presents examples for each of the virtues, within a lesson of Religious Education and outside of this lesson. Further to this, Table Two distinguishes when the virtue is addressed (or learnt), and when it is

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exercised (or practised) by students. For example, justice involves being in 'right relationship' with others. In an early childhood RE lesson, justice could be addressed through a discussion of how Jesus would have viewed 'fairness' and could be addressed outside of this lesson as children are asked to reflect on their own ability to work cooperatively with others. Justice could then be exercised within Religious Education by dramatising a scripture story, such as Zaccheaus, and outside the lesson when children participate in games and therefore practise the virtue of fairness.

Table Two

A sample of spiritual capabilities in early childhood education

	INSIDE RE LESSON	OUTSIDE RE LESSON
ADDRESSED	*Prudence*: • Identify wonder questions people ask. • Discuss the choices made by key characters in a children's book eg Miss Lily's feather boa *Justice*: • Follow the steps of an examination of conscience. • Discuss what it means to be 'fair' • Dramatise scenarios around 'being helpful'. *Fortitude*: • Explore scenarios that require resilience • Read about a particular community organisation for fundraising. *Temperance*: • Explore scenarios that encourage self-discipline and control of emotions • Discuss that prayer is part of life and not just for RE.	*Prudence*: • Debate an issue. • Follow behaviour management policy for the class and school is based on making 'good choices'. *Justice*: • Reflect each day on how to relate to each other and work cooperatively. • identify that there are people less fortunate in the community *Fortitude*: • Encourage children to 'have a go' in other activities: reading, writing, numeracy • Explore strategies during Health lessons that can be used to build resilience. *Temperance*: • Identify different types of emotions. • Recognise ways to self-monitor behaviour and focus on gaining independence

EXERCISED	*Prudence*: • Students pose wonder questions about their own uniqueness and then what God might be like who created them in this way • Students pose wonder questions about the natural world *Justice*: • Perform in a role-play of Jesus meeting Zacchaeus. • Journal how they would respond to scenarios dealing with issues of 'fairness' *Fortitude*: • Recall stories of Jesus and parables that relate to overcoming difficult times • Answer the question, "What would you do?" in response to a range of challenging scenarios. *Temperance*: • Engage in short meditations • Reflect on the ways Jesus showed his emotions	*Prudence*: • Take opportunities to consider the beauty of nature • Consider the impact their choices have on others *Justice*: • Participate in cooperative strategies. • Contribute to school based activities that care for the environment • Play games with an understanding of fairness *Fortitude*: • Experience challenges that may result in failure. • Use strategies to deal with difficult situations, eg PATHS program *Temperance*: • Accepting people with difference. • Participate in nature walks and other activities that encourage 'down-time'

Examples of implementing Spiritual Capabilities in secondary education

Table Three lists possible ways of learning and applying spiritual capabilities related to the cardinal human virtues. In the case of prudence, students have the opportunity to find out how religious people make choices to follow God's call in Religious Education and how they make choices as they learn in their other classes. Furthermore, students would have the opportunity to consider their commitment towards harmony with others and God's creation. They also can exercise prudence in a job interview or when considering subject selection. For the virtue of justice, students may learn in RE about how Jesus taught about repentance and righteousness through parables and the steps in examining their conscience. They can learn in other classes how people respond to social justice issues around the world today. Students can try 'being just' by considering how they can be merciful or try acting fairly in using resources. They can also practise acting justly through experiences such as service-learning. For fortitude, students can learn in RE how religious people or organisations face critical situations. In other classes, students can explore the value of resilience. Students also have the chance to exercise fortitude in various class activities within and outside of the RE class. In the case of temperance, students can learn how religious people 'moderate' their

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behaviour through self-sacrifice and meditating. They can explore the value of self-discipline outside

of the RE class. Students can practise humility and abstinence or spend time in prayer or meditation.

Table Three

A sample of spiritual capabilities in secondary education

	INSIDE RE LESSON	OUTSIDE RE LESSON
ADDRESSED	*Prudence*: • Examine case-studies of real-life situations of people making choices and resulting behaviours. • Explore the life-choices of a saint. • Research the changes made from one of the papal documents from Vatican Council II. *Justice*: • Outline the ways Jesus used parables to promote his teachings on repentance and righteousness. • Outline the steps for an examination of conscience. *Fortitude*: • Explore the life of a person who faced a challenging situation. • Research an organisation that supports people in crisis. *Temperance*: • Discuss how the Season of Lent or Lenten activities eg Rice Bowl Day promote the virtue of moderation. • Discuss the place of prayer and meditation in the life of Christian people.	*Prudence*: • In English, choose a scene from a text or film and discuss how the author dealt with the situation. • Perform a science experiment and ask questions about the results. • Choose appropriate food and equipment for an outdoor education camp. *Justice:* • Research the work of the United Nations in improving the lives of people around the world. • Apply social justice principles to an economic or technological issue. *Fortitude*: • Practise Italian speaking skills. • Research the rehabilitation of a sports star after serious injury. *Temperance*: • Apply ways to assist mental and emotional wellbeing. • Recall the purpose of a fasting activity eg Rice Bowl Day

EXERCISED

Prudence:
- Re-enact a religious person's life-choice situation and reflect on the experience the dilemmas created.
- After viewing images of God's creation, people, and outer space, students suggest their own questions of wonder.

Justice:
- Read the Beatitudes and reflect how one of these beatitudes can encourage them to be loving and forgiving.
- Practise providing fair use of natural resources in a game.

Fortitude:
- Answer the question, "What would you do?" in response to a range of challenging scenarios.
- Students journal their response to a challenging issue.
- Recite a 'Hail Mary' before an RE test.

Temperance:
- Journal the ways in which they feel grateful and why.
- Practise a Christian meditation.
- Reflect on Lenten practices of abstinence and fasting.

Prudence:
- Prepare for and participate in a mock job interview.
- Propose a viewpoint or argument in a debate.
- Discuss subject selections choices.

Justice:
- Participate in community building games.
- Spend time in prayer using an examination of conscience.
- Participate in a voluntary community service activity.

Fortitude:
- Perform an oral assessment or role-play in front of a class.
- Reflect on why facing a challenge is healthy.
- Participate in an outdoor trek through challenging conditions.

Temperance:
- Students immersed in pastoral care program that nurtures their well-being.
- Participate in quiet time or meditation on a retreat.
- Participate in an Ash Wednesday day of fasting.

What are religious capabilities?

Religious capabilities focus on the ways people integrate religious knowledge, practices and dispositions to become religious. In one sense there is a basic religious literacy that students in Catholic schools can acquire. This literacy extends beyond the Intercultural understanding capability of religious diversity in the Australian curriculum (ACARA, n. d. b). Tolerance and respect for the beliefs of others are important as is an understanding about how to interpret and engage with this diversity. Prothero (2007) makes the point that religious literacy is, "the ability to understand and use the religious terms, symbols, images, beliefs, practices, scriptures, heroes, themes, and stories that are employed in …public life" (p. 13). While Reid (2011) laments how the Australian curriculum neglects a deep understanding of the role of religion in society, it is incumbent on Catholic schools to provide such an understanding from an 'insider' point of view (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 47). As Rossiter (2010) points out, one step forward for Catholic schools is to introduce students to the experience of "religiosity or religious spirituality" (p. 7), to discover how a Catholic

person's spirituality is expressed meaningfully through, and interplays with, a religious culture. However, to offer religiosity only as a cultural overlay to spirituality may be limiting the student's growth as a human person and possibly holds little relevance to pre-churched youth with social alliances focused elsewhere. Young people today may be living a shallower spirituality than in previous generations but many still have a deep yearning to look for something more to their lives (Rossiter, 2010; Campaign Brief, 2012; McCrindle, 2013; Raising Children Network, Australia, 2013; Smith, Longest, Hill & Christoffersen, 2014). There may be value in offering a suite of religious capabilities that extend beyond religious literacy to the exercise of the religious imagination (Bednar, 1996).

Developing the religious imagination may allow students to explore deeply how and where God may be present in people's lives, and especially their own (Branson, 2010). A Catholic school has a role to develop the capability to consider or discern the possibility that they can relate with God, even in the darkest moments of their lives:

> When no one listens to me anymore, God still listens to me. When I can no longer talk to anyone or call upon anyone, I can always talk to God. When there is no longer anyone to help me deal with a need or expectation that goes beyond the human capacity for hope, He can help me. (Benedict XVI, 2007, para. 32)

Furthermore, the religious capabilities in the Catholic school will be based on how students may be able to aspire towards a Christian life (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 36, 47; Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, para. 69). Pope Francis 1 (2013) has highlighted that the quest for the Christian life needs to move beyond only adopting a code of religious obligations and practices towards a re-engagement with the Gospels where "joy is the distinguishing atmosphere of the Christian life … which engenders true Christian fellowship" (Novello, 2014, p. 324). Students need opportunities "to be touched by the comfort and attraction of God's saving love, which is mysteriously at work in each person, above and beyond their faults and failings." (Francis 1, 2013, para. 44). Crucial to this growing sensitivity to God's presence in their lives, are

religious capabilities that develop the virtue of charity or mercy for only by "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6) can students become religious (Francis 1, 2013, para. 37; Novello, 2014, p. 326). The connection between the 'action' of mercy and 'becoming' religious requires careful reflection or intuition which relies on the possible interplay of the religious imagination between the two to produce 'faith' (Bednar, 1996, pp. 79, 136).

One of the difficulties for Catholic schools in promoting religious capabilities is whether students are able to build a religious "capital investment" (Smith, Longest, Hill & Christoffersen, 2014, p. 198). Such capital is based on their relationship with significant adults who are religious (ie parent, teacher, youth minister, parish priest); whether they are able to exercise their religious imagination, develop a Catholic worldview and consider the value these may have to their own lives; and, whether they are involved in some form of student ministry or parish group or whether they attend liturgies regularly (Francis 1, 2013, para. 15; Rymarz, 2014, p. 205; Smith, Longest, Hill & Christoffersen, 2014, p. 198).

Generic Religious Capabilities for Catholic schools

The generic religious capabilities are outlined here as examples. These capabilities are derived from a core religious capability — to heed God's call and be humble before God (Heb 3:7-8). Catholic schools can play a part in offering students opportunities to explore and commit to this capability. Pope Francis 1 (2013) also points out that there is a 'divine capability' at work in the process:

> In every activity of evangelization, the primacy always belongs to God, who has called us to cooperate with him and who leads us on by the power of his Spirit. The real newness is the newness which God himself mysteriously brings about and inspires, provokes, guides and accompanies in a thousand ways. (para. 12)

The generic religious capabilities (Table Four) are grouped around the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity that,

are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character. They inform and give life to all the moral virtues. They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life. They are the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the faculties of the human being. (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993, para. 1813)

As the theological virtues underpin the Christian moral virtues, religious capabilities in a Catholic school curriculum would enhance the Ethical Understanding capability of the Australian curriculum (ACARA, n. d. c). Above all else, the point of reference becomes love for God's sake and epitomised by God's Son, for "being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person [Jesus Christ], which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction" (Benedict XVI, 2005, para. 1). The theological virtues articulate what it means to be Christian, and as the aim of the Catholic school is to evangelise the young towards becoming Christian men and women (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 47), they can be utilised as the framework for developing religious capabilities.

Table Four

Generic Religious Capabilities

Theological Virtues	Generic Religious Capabilities	Habits or dispositions
Faith	• To search for God & become mystified by God • To serve God & become God's witness • To worship God & become reverent	➔ To adopt habits of awe, mission and praise for God
Hope	• To trust & become hope-filled by God • To repent & become redeemed by God • To follow & become a *missionary disciple** of Jesus	➔ To adopt habits of joy, optimism and humility in God's benevolence
Charity	• To give & become charitable like God • To act justly & become merciful like God • To respect all people & become tolerant of others' beliefs	➔ To adopt habits of love, service and thanksgiving for God's sake

* Francis 1, 2013, para. 120

In a similar fashion to examples for spiritual capabilities, Tables Five and Six provide examples of religious capabilities. This time the examples reflect opportunities for students to learn and exercise the theological virtues: faith, hope and charity.

Examples of implementing Religious Capabilities in early childhood education

In an early childhood context, religious capabilities can be learned and developed both within the Religious Education lesson and they can be integrated throughout the school day. For example, the theological virtue of hope could be addressed within RE by exploring that people say 'sorry' in the hope of restoring relationships. Outside of the RE lesson, the virtue of hope could be addressed through the use of children's literature that contributes to the theme of reconciliation. The virtue of hope could be exercised within RE by exploring scenarios where it would be appropriate to say 'sorry' and 'I forgive you', whilst participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation is an example of how the virtue of hope could be exercised outside of the RE lesson.

Table Five

A sample of religious capabilities in early childhood education

	INSIDE RE LESSON	OUTSIDE RE LESSON
ADDRESSED	*Faith:* • Memorise prayers including the sign of the cross, Hail Mary • Explore that Jesus is the Son of God • The Parish Priest speaks with the children about the Church being God's family *Hope:* • Pose questions about the good in themselves and others. • Explain why we say 'sorry' to restore relationships. *Charity:* • Explore the story of the Good Samaritan • Explore the life of the school's patron Saint • Explain the importance of caring for people in need	*Faith:* • Pray different prayers through Mary throughout the day • Explore children's literature on the theme of family relationships • Prepare for a school Mass or Liturgy of the Word. *Hope:* • Make individual and class goals for the term • Explore children's literature on the theme of positivity • Explore children's literature on the theme of reconciliation. *Charity:* • Identify acts that show concern for others • Consider what makes a good friend – how can we care for our friends • Caring for the natural environment- sustainability in Science

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EXERCISED

Faith:
- Practise prayers in an RE lesson.
- Students write their own prayers
- Take a visit to the local Church and explore the space
- Students brainstorm questions they would like to ask the Parish Priest

Hope:
- Students rehearse the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Pray the Rosary
- Explore scenarios when people might need to say 'sorry' and 'I forgive you'

Charity:
- Re-enact the Good Samaritan story.
- Write a class letter to a project Compassion child.

Faith:
- Participate in a school Mass or prayer service.
- Assist with the prayer roster and caring for the class altar
- Songs learnt in RE are used in transition times

Hope:
- Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Recount events about being hopeful from a children's book

Charity:
- Participate in fundraising events eg: food drives
- Donate to Caritas' Project Compassion.
- Create a class chart about how they can care for their friends
- Show tolerance to people and be understanding of difference

Examples of implementing Religious Capabilities in secondary education

For the virtue of faith, students can learn about how religious people come to know and follow God in Religious Education. Outside of the RE class, students can learn about the place of religious culture in the Arts or take part in training to become an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist. They can 'practise' faith by designing their own heart-felt prayers or through expressive dance and drama such as liturgical dance during a school Mass. In the case of hope, students can explore the human need to search for meaning in life and the ways people remain optimistic in the face of traumatic circumstances. At a personal level, this could be achieved by providing students with the time and space to reflect on their challenges and their hopes. Students can revise and attend to the First Rite of Reconciliation or spend some quiet time in a reflective space or memorial garden in the school grounds. Students can read the Gospel account of Jesus washing the feet of his disciple to learn about the virtue of charity. They could also learn about Caritas and how to conduct acts of service. Students could re-enact the parable of the Good Samaritan and participate in Harmony Day to exercise their virtue of charity.

Table Six

A sample of religious capabilities in secondary education

	INSIDE RE LESSON	OUTSIDE RE LESSON
ADDRESSED	*Faith:* • Reciting different types of prayers. • Explore why people worship God and how (prayer). • Research the place of a divine power in world religions. • Listen to a religious person speak about a religious vocation. *Hope:* • Research on House Patrons and Saints • Explore 'Questions of the Human Heart'. • Explain why Christian repent of sins and how. *Charity:* • Read the Gospel account of the Last Supper especially the washing of feet. • Explain the importance of 'Rice Bowl' day. • Explore the life of St Mother Teresa and her Sisters of Charity	*Faith:* • Follow the choreography of expressive dance (such as liturgical dance) within the Arts. • Analyse a religious play in Drama. • Recall the appropriate behaviour for praying during Homeroom. • Participate in an Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist program. *Hope:* • Watch the film 'La Vita é Bella' (Life is Beautiful). • Explore the historical events around the Holocaust. • Reflect on hopes for the future on a retreat. *Charity:* • Identify acts of selflessness or concern for others around the school. • Service learning – part of the pastoral care program. • Students reflect on Caritas project, 'Food for Life' in Homeroom.
EXERCISED	*Faith:* • Practise prayer or meditation in an RE lesson. • Student design their own prayers. • Visit a chapel or church and identify the signs & symbols and their meanings Hope: • Practise the First Rite of Reconciliation • Discuss the effect Project Compassion has on people in need. • Practise the Mystery of Light Rosary. *Charity:* • Attend a Seder Meal that includes symbols of Passover • Re-enact the Good Samaritan story. • Adopt a Lenten practice of mercy or justice.	*Faith:* • Engaging in expressive Arts such as a liturgical dance in a Mass. • Performing in a religious play. • Attend a school or parish Mass. • Students take turns to lead the prayer in Homeroom each morning. *Hope:* • Attend the Sacrament of Reconciliation. • Spend time in the school's memorial garden. • Ask questions of a guest speaker about hoping. *Charity:* • Holy Week liturgy of the Word at school. • Participate in cross-cultural activities eg Harmony Day • Organise a food/clothing appeal during winter.

Opportunities for deeper learning outcomes

On the premise that there is a need to develop spiritual and religious capabilities within the

Catholic school curriculum, an opportunity exists to deepen the learning outcomes for students

across all areas of learning and development. Catholic schools, in integrating faith, life and culture,

can provide a context for holistic approaches to student's development and education. A move

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towards a holistic approach is one that focuses on the spiritual capacity of the student as integrated with the other human capacities, rather than compartmentalising the various components of learning and development (Vialle, Lysaght & Verenikina, 2012).

The inclusion of spiritual and religious capabilities, within a holistic view of curriculum and development, has the potential to contribute positively to student's sense of wellbeing and, therefore, their overall learning. Literature affirms this connection between spiritual development and mental health and wellbeing, particularly within children. Eaude (2009) suggests that when adults are attuned to the spiritual development of the child, the attributes which contribute to a positive mental health, including happiness, resilience and agency, are enhanced. Further to this, much empirical research has presented the correlation that exists between a strong sense of wellbeing and school success (Bagdi & Vacca, 2005; Biggar & Pizzolongo, 2004; Caine & Caine, 1991). Essentially, research supports the view that attention to the spiritual capacity can assist students across all areas of their learning and development by promoting skills in social emotional learning, and therefore, assist in deepening the learning outcomes for students; "An integrated curriculum geared towards the whole child and reflective of their abilities to handle transitions, manage their emotions, and develop meaningful relationships with others is key to promoting school success" (Bagdi & Vacca, 2005, p. 146).

In the context of the Catholic school curriculum, the inclusion of religious capabilities in conjunction with spiritual capabilities can further deepen student's opportunities for learning. The curriculum of all subjects, when taught through spiritual and religious capabilities are able to contribute to the mission of the Catholic school in integrating faith, life and culture.

Conclusion

The inclusion of spiritual and religious capabilities, proposed in this article, complement the distinctive nature of the Catholic school. The Catholic Bishop's Mandate Letter (CECWA, 2009), that mandates Catholic schools in Western Australia, articulates a key function of Catholic schools is to

provide excellence in education within a uniquely Catholic context. However, this function is not for education alone but, more importantly, to evangelise the young towards becoming Christian men and women (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 47). In acknowledging this mission, Catholic schools ensure that the Australian Curriculum general capabilities underpin the learning areas as a means of creating students equipped with the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions to contribute to society. In addressing the uniquely Catholic context, and assisting in the mission of the Church, Catholic schools promote within their students an integration of faith, life and culture. This integration of faith, life and culture draws on the individual's innate spirituality to provide opportunities for religious development. As this article suggests, the inclusion of both spiritual and religious capabilities alongside the general capabilities has an opportunity to provide students with the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions to function as Catholic men and women in the 21st Century.

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